



CECIL COLLEGE

Senate Finance Committee

Senate Bill 774 – Maryland Pathway to Nursing, Program and Advisory Committee-Establishment

March 7, 2023

Support

Testimony of Christy Dryer, DNP, RN, CNE
Vice-President of Academic Programs, Cecil College
Former Dean of Nursing, Cecil College

Thank you for your time today. I am here to voice my support for **HB 1160 The Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee Establishment**. As we are all aware there is a nursing workforce shortage in Maryland and across the country, with a recent study conducted by Maryland Hospital Association indicating a shortage of 5000 RNs and 4000 LPNs in 2021 and this is predicted to increase over the coming years (2022). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that more than 275,000 additional nurses are needed from 2020 to 2030, and that employment opportunities for nurses will grow at 6 percent, faster than other occupations from 2016 through 2026 (2022). And, as we all know, the pandemic only exacerbated the need for nurses, with working conditions that contributed to burnout and nurses leaving the profession. In a recent MHA survey, 62% of the over 85,000 nurses have thought about leaving the nursing profession recently-potentially creating an even larger deficit in the nursing workforce.

The need is well established and is reaching a critical juncture. We want to be able to provide nursing care to the citizens of Maryland, but will be lacking the nurses to do so. This issue demands creative and innovative ideas. The Nursing Pathway program is designed to bring together stakeholders from across the state, in workforce, education, and healthcare to design and pilot an innovative program to meet this challenge.

Speaking as a community college administrator and educator, Community Colleges have been at the forefront of providing excellent nursing education, at various levels, to a diverse population for many years. Community colleges are located in the communities they serve, providing the opportunity to educate a workforce similar to the population it serves. Community colleges have a long-standing tradition of providing health care education access for underrepresented populations (Campaign for Action, 2022). Providing excellent, affordable education that adapts to meet community needs while supporting our students is a hallmark of community colleges. Our students are often the most under-resourced and yet most determined to meet their goals.

There is no doubt that community college students are competent. NCLEX pass rates for LPN and RN programs across the state attest to this (2023). However, our students often face financial and social challenges that impact their ability to complete an educational program. I have lost count of the number of stories I have about students deciding to leave college because of the loss of housing, a needed car repair, loss of child care, or other stressor. The wrap around services described in this bill would address so many of these issues, facilitating the mitigation of stressors that often inhibit students' successful completion of health care education programs.

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The health care environment is evolving and nursing education is challenging; as our students will often attest. However, this bill could potentially develop new and innovative pathways to support the development of a robust workforce as well as support our students, allowing them to focus on their studies as they become competent health care providers.

Thank you for supporting HB 1160.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Registered Nurses, at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm> (visited February 14, 2023).

Maryland Nurse Workforce Projections: 2021-2035 (2022). Maryland Hospital Association.
<https://www.mhaonline.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/maryland-nurse-workforce-projections-globaldata.pdf>

NCLEX pass rates (2022). Maryland Board of Nursing. <https://mbon.maryland.gov/Pages/education-nclex-stats.aspx>

New RN graduates by degree type, by race/ethnicity (2022). Campaign for Action.
<https://campaignforaction.org/resource/new-rn-graduates-degree-type-raceethnicity/> August 21, 2022

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